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THE MESSIAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT JEW

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1960

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE MESSIAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT JEW	1
II. THE MAL'AKH YAHWEH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	7
The Mal'Akh Yahweh Has Divine Power Over History and Nations	7
The Mal'Akh Yahweh Has the Power of Divine Judgment .	11
The Divine Person and Mission of the Mal'Akh Yahweh .	14
The Mal'Akh Yahweh is Called God and Christ in the New Testament	26
Summary of the Mal'Akh Yahweh	28
III. THE PERSONIFIED "WISDOM OF GOD" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT . .	29
IV. THE PERSONIFIED "WORD OF GOD" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT . . .	36
V. THE EBED YAHWEH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	40
Summary of the Ebed Yahweh Poems	46
VI. THE MESSIAH AS PORTRAYED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

CHAPTER I

THE MESSIAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT JEW

And behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of Thy people Israel."¹

"And behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon."

That is all he was, an elderly, devout, Christian Jew, yet his words of thankful praise to a gracious and merciful God have become immortal. To this day, we with many other Christians of the New Testament era, might do well to ask ourselves why these words remain immortal and their glory is only enhanced by time.

Let us look at the words. Literally translated, the first verse reads, "Master, now permit your slave to leave in peace, according to your word." In these words some significant concepts appear. The faith of the believing Jew at the time of Christ was not that of a work-righteous person, secure in the knowledge that he was a member of God's chosen people and hence a little better than anyone else. Neither was there the feeling, that since he stood in the Mosaic Covenant relationship to God,² he was thereby assured of a place in heaven. This was indeed the faith

¹Luke 2:25-32.

²Ex. 19:5-8.

of the Pharisees and their followers, but Simeon's faith so far transcended that of the Pharisees that they can hardly be compared, except by contrast.

Simeon stood in the Mosaic Covenant relationship to God and he knew it. However, the mere fact that he was circumcised, that he bore on his body the mark of God's people,³ and that he attended religious services in the temple did not make Simeon utter the words of the *Nunc Dimittis*.

Note how he begins his prayer. "Master, now permit your slave, your bondman, to leave this world in peace." Simeon was fully conscious of the concept, which to the Christian today is so dynamic, namely, that believers in Christ are slaves, bondmen of God. We know that the reason we are bondmen of God is because He has bought us to be His own, with the precious blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Jew applied the term slave, or bondman, only to one who had been purchased to become the personal property or chattel of another.⁴ To Simeon, this was truly a marvelous blessing and the basis of a feeling of boundless security. He stood before God as a purchased slave, asking only to be permitted to leave this world in peace. He knew and stood firmly in the true covenant relationship to God, that, though he was a sinner, he could yet hope in God's mercy and forgiveness, not through any merit of his own,⁵ for he was but a slave of God, but solely and alone through the promised Messiah, his Redeemer, his Salvation.⁶ In this faith and confidence Simeon asked for

³Gen. 17:10.

⁴Gen. 21:10; Ex. 21:2.

⁵Ecc1. 7:20.

⁶Is. 52:13; 53:12.

a peaceful death, a release from this sinful world, and salvation at his Master's hands.

Simeon had often and earnestly prayed that his Master would send the Messiah. We are told that this event was something for which he had long been waiting. His heavenly Master revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen Him, for whose advent he had prayed so earnestly.⁷ Now he stood in the temple of God, holding in his arms the answer to his prayers. His heart filled with joy, awe, and gratitude caused him to pray, "Master, now permit your slave to leave in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation." This infant is He, of whom the prophets wrote; this is He, through whom salvation is to come to the world; this is He, for whom I have prayed and waited; this infant is none other than the promised Messiah, the Salvation of God incarnate. He will deliver all from eternal death. This grace has been granted me, that my eyes have been privileged to see Him.

So Simeon must have thought as he held the baby Jesus. This was the climax of his long life, and he burst out into a paean of praise to his Savior and God, saying, "My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all people." For a Jew, this was a tremendous and meaningful statement. Simeon was, in effect, saying that God had sent the Messiah as the salvation of all people, not only the Jews.⁸ This infant was to be made known to the entire world, because, God had prepared Him for His task with the special intention that Jesus, and His work of salvation, should be of public and universal concern among all

⁷Luke 2:26.

⁸Is. 49:6a.

nations. Through Him, salvation was to be offered to all people, thus releasing them from the curse of eternal death. Such was the faith of this Jewish saint. He saw in Christ not a Jewish Savior, or Jewish national hero, but a universal Savior sent by God, with the express intention of saving all mankind.⁹

He brings out this idea in the beautiful closing stanza of his song of praise, "My eyes have seen your Salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light for enlightenment of the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel." The purpose of God in sending Christ was, then, that all the world might be enlightened by Him, who is the Light of Life, and in whom there is no darkness. He came forth from heaven, to shed the rays of eternal life and the light of eternal day upon the entire race of mankind, which dwelt in the darkness of eternal death and eternal night. He was sent to be Simeon's Light, your Light, and the Light of all the world, that whoever would be enlightened by Him, might have the Light of Eternal Life blazing within him. This was the primary purpose of the Savior's coming.

However, while He was saving man, He would be crowning the people of God, the Jews, with their most glorious moment.¹⁰ The fact, that they chose to reject Him, made no difference; He still was their glory. After His death and resurrection, He still would remain the glory of the Jews in a twofold sense. He would be their glory, in that He was their way to eternal glory. He would be their glory, in that, for all time, people of all nations would concede that the most glorious period in history

⁹Is. 49:6b.

¹⁰Zech. 12:8.

was unfolded in the Jewish land of Palestine during the time Jesus was on earth. He would be their glory in that people of all nations would concede that the most glorious personage in history was a Jew named Jesus, for He was the incarnate Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

This, then, was Simeon, a humble believer, a sinner, who trusted in God for his salvation through the promised Messiah. This was Simeon, a devout Jew, who gloried in the fact that His Savior and Way to eternal life was also to serve as the way to eternal life for all mankind, not only the Jews. He possessed the basic earmarks of a modern Christian: a knowledge of his sin, a deep faith and belief that God's salvation was for the entire world, a positive conviction that since Christ was the God-sent Savior of the entire world, He was also his personal Savior. This gave him the unshakable peace that through faith in His Savior, eternal life was now waiting for him beyond death.

The question remains, if Simeon had such a faith, and the Greek of the New Testament indicates he did, where did he get such a clear picture of Christ, and God's plan of salvation? The main source of his faith was found in the Old Testament, sacred writings considered by the faithful Jews of his time to be the Scriptures wherein God had revealed His salvation to men. He had searched and found, he had thirsted for the water of life; and he had found the eternal fountain of God's mercy and grace to a sinful and fallen mankind.¹¹

Because this is only a B.D. Thesis, and hence limited in scope, this paper will of necessity be restricted to four areas of Old Testament

¹¹Is. 55:1-6.

Christology: (1) A study of the Mal'Akh Yahweh; (2) A study of the personified Wisdom of God; (3) A study of the personified Word of God; (4) A study of the Servant of the Lord Poems. These areas will all be considered in an effort to ascertain the way in which the believing Jew of Jesus' time pictured the Messiah and His work. These areas will also be noted as roots of New Testament Theological emphases. As such, the emphases will be indicated.

CHAPTER II

THE MAL'AKH YAHWEH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Mal'Akh Yahweh Has Divine Power Over History and Nations

As one begins to read and study the Holy Bible, it becomes evident very quickly that God created beings called angels, in addition to man. When the Bible uses the term angel,¹ it is referring to living, invisible, celestial beings, created by God at some time during the six days of creation.² These beings are holy, wise, and extremely powerful.³ They serve God as His messengers, caring for, and protecting all Christians, throughout the world, as their name indicates.⁴ The holy angels have as their one aim the glorification of God. At no time, in the entire Bible, did they ever permit a man to offer to them any sacrifice, worship or glory. All such honor belongs to God and God alone.⁵ It should be noted, that this is what the angel told John when he fell down to worship him.⁶

Concerning the existence of angels, Dr. J. T. Mueller in his

¹Hebrew, Mal'Akh, transliterated--Greek, Angellos, transliterated.

²Ex. 20:11.

³Luke 9:26; 2 Sam. 14:17,20; Ps. 103:20; 2 Thess. 1:7; John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 197.

⁴Heb. 1:14; Ps. 91:11; Matt. 18:10; Dr. Carl Meusel, Kirchliches Handlerikon (Leipzig, Germany: Verlag von Justus Neumann, 1880), Zweiter Band, pp. 353-357.

⁵Matt. 4:10; Ex. 34:14.

⁶Rev. 22:9.

Christian Dogmatics says that this cannot be proved by reason, but must be drawn from Scripture which teaches their existence from Genesis to Revelation in such passages as Genesis 3:24, Genesis 32:1,2, Psalm 104:4, Isaiah 6, and Revelation 12:7.⁷

He goes on to say that the term "angel," by which the Bible designates this class of created, finite, and invisible beings, does not describe their essence, but their office, and signifies "one sent," or a messenger. The nature of the angels is described by the term, spirit. That the name, angel, is a designation of office is clear from the fact that Scripture ascribes it: (a) to ministers of the divine Word (Malachi 2:7; Matthew 11:10); (b) to the Son of God, the "uncreated angel," as the Supreme and unique Messenger of God (Malachi 3:1; John 3:17-34; Isaiah 63:9; Genesis 48:16).⁸

The Old Testament presents a wide variety of pictures of the Mal'Akh, for He appears often. He is recognized as God, accepts sacrifices and worship, forgives sin, is obeyed by angels, rebukes Satan, is obeyed by, loved by, and known to the Old Testament saints simply as "the Mal'Akh," "the Mal'Akh Yahweh," or "the Mal'Akh Elohim." The writers of the Old Testament use His title interchangeably with that of God Himself. Stephen, in the New Testament identifies Him as God, while Paul identifies Him as God and Christ.

⁷John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 196.

⁸Ibid., p. 196.

⁹Ibid., p. 196; Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 396; C. F. W. Walther, Baieri Compendium (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 5, 45, 104.

In this paper, we will consider four facets of the Mal'Akh:

- (1) His divine role in history; (2) His divine power of judgement; (3) His divine person and mission; (4) The recognition of Him and His divinity in the New Testament.

History has had many crises dictated or shaped by varying influences, which in turn resulted in a myriadic number of solutions. However, no single Being has appeared at more critical times or effected more determining influences and solutions than the Mal'Akh Yahweh in the history of the Old Testament Jewish race.

If we turn to the first reference of the Mal'Akh in Genesis 16:7, we find that He has halted the flight of Hagar from Sarai, Abram's wife. He instructs her to return to Sarai with the promise that He would make her son Ishmael a powerful nation. He claimed for Himself the power of shaping this part of history and developing this nation.¹⁰

In Genesis 22:11ff., after Abraham had not refused to obey God even to the point of sacrificing Isaac, the Mal'Akh promises Abraham that He would make of his descendants a great nation. Furthermore, from this nation a Seed would arise in whom all the families of the earth would be blest. The shaping of this history would be within His power.¹¹

If we take Genesis 28:12,13 in the light of Genesis 31:11-13 we will note that the Mal'Akh is the God of Bethel. He it is who promises to give the land of Canaan to Jacob and his descendants. Thus the future ownership of the land of Canaan is determined by the decree of the Mal'Akh. The subsequent history of Jacob and his family is well known

¹⁰Gen. 16:10-12.

¹¹Gen. 22:18.

to us all. The sale of Joseph into slavery resulted in the four hundred years of slavery in Egypt for the now populous nation of Israel. In Exodus 3:24 and 4:17 the Mal'Akh commanded Moses to go to Egypt and lead Israel out of slavery. He is further told that the Mal'Akh will bring them safely out of Egypt, lead them to Canaan, and dispossess the inhabitants so that the Israelites may have the land.

The resultant story of the Exodus is replete with evidences of His power, love and protection, if we but turn to such passages as Exodus 13:21, Exodus 14:19-24, Exodus 23:20-23, Exodus 33:2,3, Numbers 20:16 and Numbers 22:22-35,38. At the conclusion of the Exodus, the task of conquering the land confronted the Israelites and Joshua. At that time according to Joshua 5:13, and Joshua 6:2, the Mal'Akh appeared to Joshua, stating that He had given Jericho into the hands of the Israelites.

After the settlement of the land came the ever recurrent apostasy. In Judges 2:1-5 we are told the Mal'Akh appeared at Bochim where He rebuked the Israelites and brought them to repentance for a short period.¹² However, their punishment was this: they would not be enabled to completely drive out the heathen. Further apostasy resulted in the subjugation of the land by the Midianites. When the people turned to God, the Mal'Akh appeared to Gideon and enabled him to defeat the Midianite host of one hundred thirty thousand men with only three hundred men.

More apostasy led to taxation and oppression by the Philistines. This in turn caused the Israelites to pray to God for help. The Mal'Akh appeared to Manoah and his wife announcing the birth of Samson, who

¹²Judges 2:1-5.

judged Israel for twenty years, inspiring a fear and dread among the Philistines for his God-given strength.

With the establishment of the kingdom under David and the growth of the school of the prophets, the Mal'Akh appeared but once, and this was in a punitive role.¹³ This was when He was sent to destroy the Israelites for the sin of pride which David had committed in having the people numbered.

It is no wonder that Isaiah spoke of His great deeds for Israel in Isaiah 63:9. Here we are told that the Mal'Akh was with the Jews in all their sufferings, that He saved them in all of them. Furthermore, in His love and pity He redeemed them, was patient with them, and carried them all the days of old. It is a picture of the ultimate in love and protection granted any people.

It is only natural then, that in Malachi 3:1-3, the prophet speaks of the coming of the Mal'Akh of the Covenant to cleanse, purify and judge. He had played a tremendous and well-known role in Jewish history. So much so, that He was looked upon by the Jews as their Redeemer, Savior and Helper. Malachi through inspiration gives expression to this belief and caps it when he says that the Mal'Akh of the Covenant, in whom the Jews delighted, would be He whom God would send on the Messianic Mission.

The Mal'Akh Yahweh Has the Power of Divine Judgment

In Mark 2:7 and Luke 5:21, we read that God alone has the power to forgive sins. In 1 John 3:4, we are told that sin is the transgression of the law. In Ecclesiastes 7:20, we read that there is not a just man

¹³² Sam. 24:16-20; 1 Chron. 21:15-19; 2 Chron. 3:1.

upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not. In other words, the basic truth of the sinfulness of man before a just and holy God was a truth derived from the Old Testament by the Jews at the time of Christ, as well as a truth known to the Old Testament Jews.¹⁴

The first instance of the divine power of the Mal'Akh for judgment is found in Exodus 23:20-25. Here Yahweh addresses His people directly, saying that He will send His Mal'Akh before them to lead them into the land of Canaan. The Israelites are warned not to provoke Him or disobey Him for He, the Mal'Akh, would not pardon their transgression. This power was attributed to Him because the name of God was within Him. Yahweh, Himself, attests the divine power residing within the Mal'Akh, acknowledging, and even declaring the power of judgment for sin as belonging to the Mal'Akh.

In Numbers 22:22-35,38, we come to the story of Balaam. He is told by God not to go to curse the Israelites. However, being tempted by money and hoping God would relent, he goes with the enemies of the Jews. We are told that Elohim is angry with Balaam for going. Suddenly Balaam's ass stops upon seeing the Mal'Akh before it. It jams Balaam's foot against a wall and rebukes Balaam when he punishes it for refusing to proceed in the presence of the Mal'Akh. Balaam is then granted the vision of the ass and sees the Mal'Akh Yahweh standing before him. He is told by the Mal'Akh that his behavior is sinful before Him and worthy of death whereupon Balaam begs forgiveness. He is told to speak only what the Mal'Akh tells him. Balaam acknowledges the divinity of the Mal'Akh when he later states that he could only utter what Elohim told

¹⁴Ex. 20:5,6; 1 Kings 8:46.

him.¹⁵ He thus regarded the Mal'Akh as God.

Years later when the people had become unfaithful and idolatrous the Mal'Akh Yahweh appeared in Bochim and rebuked the people for their unfaithfulness and disobedience. Nowhere does He state that the people have sinned against God, but claims that the sin was against Him. Because of this sin, He would also punish the people by not allowing them to drive out and fully overcome the heathen nations. The result of His message was that the people sacrificed there to Yahweh. Here also the Mal'Akh claims the power to judge, to retain and punish sins of men.

David expressed this belief in Psalm 35:5,6 when He prayed God to send the Mal'Akh to pursue his enemies. Not only does He pray that the Mal'Akh would pursue them, but that He would also cause them to fall and persecute or punish them. The Mal'Akh, so to speak, was to be his Avenger, his Vindicator against all the ungodly. Certainly such power belonged to God alone.

Solomon, David's son, showed this still more clearly from the positive side when in Ecclesiastes 5:6 he urged believers to be careful in their speech, lest evil speech cause them to commit sinful acts. Moreover, if a believer should fall into such sin, he should not be brazen and try to excuse himself before the Mal'Akh by claiming it to be a mistake. Such an attitude would incur the anger of God and lead to judgment and condemnation. The Mal'Akh is pictured as being the Judge of man's sins and if He is sinned against, God is sinned against.

Satan also acknowledges this power of the Mal'Akh in Zechariah 3:1-4. Here Joshua, the High Priest, is pictured as standing before the Mal'Akh

¹⁵ Num. 22:38.

Yahweh for judgment while Satan stands by as the accuser. Although Joshua is spoken of as being before the Mal'Akh, yet we are told that Yahweh addresses Satan and rebukes him, stating that Joshua is a brand plucked from the fire. He then orders the angels to remove the filthy garb of Joshua and to clothe him with heavenly raiment. The scene is definitely one in which Joshua is forgiven his sins and granted forgiveness and righteousness by the Mal'Akh. The term Mal'Akh Yahweh is changed to Yahweh when He speaks and yet the same Being is addressing Satan and Joshua. Here then the Mal'Akh is pictured as having power to sit in judgment, to forgive sins, to make Satan bow before Him, and to make good angels do His bidding.

As we consider the power of judgment the Mal'Akh possessed, the question of the Pharisees becomes extremely relevant, "Who can forgive sins but God?"¹⁶ The Mal'Akh could and did.

The Divine Person and Mission of the Mal'Akh Yahweh

Whenever the Mal'Akh appeared to people in the Old Testament they were left with the positive conviction that they had seen and talked with God. The first reference to the Mal'Akh Yahweh is found in Genesis 16:7ff. Sarah had grown weary of waiting for God to grant her a son and had resorted to the custom of giving the maid to the husband as a concubine. Any offspring, the wife could claim as her own. Hagar, her maid became pregnant and she openly showed contempt for her mistress Sarah. Sarah appealed to Abraham and when given a free hand, drove Hagar away with harsh treatment. While she was resting near a spring the Mal'Akh appeared

¹⁶Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21.

to her and gently chided her for running away. He then commanded her to return, promising to bless her and her son. While we are told that the Mal'Akh appeared to her, that it was the Mal'Akh who spoke to her, He is designated later as Yahweh, by the writer. Hagar, herself, called Him, "Thou Elohim art my Beholder or Seer."¹⁷ Thus the Mal'Akh is here separate from God in person, yet God Himself.

Some years after the birth of Isaac, the son of promise, we are told in Genesis 22:1ff that Abraham was instructed by God¹⁸ to take Isaac and sacrifice him on a designated mountain. Abraham set out in unquestioning faith to carry out God's command. After he had built the altar and arranged the wood, he placed Isaac upon it. He was about to kill his only son when suddenly the voice of the Mal'Akh Yahweh stopped him saying, "Now I know that thou fearest God seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only son from me." The Mal'Akh said Isaac had not been withheld from Him. Such honor God reserved only for Himself.¹⁹ Abraham then was about to sacrifice Isaac to the Mal'Akh. The Mal'Akh then blesses Abraham and provides a ram which Abraham offers to Yahweh as a thank offering. Abraham is convinced the Mal'Akh is God and names that never-to-be-forgotten hill, Jehovah-jireh, or "at the hill of Yahweh, provision is made." He refers to the Mal'Akh as Yahweh and names the hill after His mercy.

Possibly the man who had the closest and most frequent contact with

¹⁷Elohim--the Mighty One. Yahweh and Elohim, synonymous terms for God. Mal'Akh used interchangeably with both in the Old Testament.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ex. 22:29; Ps. 50:14; Ezek. 44:15; Is. 42:8.

the Mal'Akh was Jacob.²⁰ On his deathbed in Genesis 48:15,16 in words of singular beauty and power, he invokes the blessing of the Mal'Akh upon his grandchildren by Joseph, saying,

God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my father Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

In this beautiful and meaningful blessing Jacob refers to the God of his fathers as the God who had sustained him. He then refers to the Angel or the Mal'Akh separately as the One who had redeemed him from all evil. He prayed the Mal'Akh to permit the name of Israel to be named on his half-Egyptian grandsons by Joseph, that they might share in the blessings of God's chosen people. He thus distinguished between God and the Mal'Akh, the Mal'Akh being separate in person, yet God Himself.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Abraham spoke of God's Angel in a similar way in Genesis 24:7,40. The Mal'Akh would be the One whom God would send to bring Eliezer safely and successfully through his journey in seeking a wife for Isaac. There is no cross reference to this passage, but the similarity is striking, in that the Mal'Akh is God's guide for His fledgling nation. God Himself uses it in Exodus 23:20-23, Exodus 32:32 and Exodus 33:2. Moses uses it in this sense in Numbers 20:16. The picture is always the same, God sends His Angel to preserve, protect, guide, and bless His people.

Well might Jacob have prayed to the Mal'Akh in the afore-mentioned manner, for if we turn back to his younger years we find the Mal'Akh

²⁰Ioannis Gerhardt, Loci Theologici (Lipsiae: J. C. Hinrichs, 1885), VIII, 351, 366, 430, 433.

constantly redeeming him from all evil. When Jacob fled from death at the hands of Esau and slept at Bethel he was granted a wondrous dream. He saw a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, on which the created angels of God were descending and ascending.²¹ This ladder extended from the earth at Bethel to the presence of God who stood above it and spoke to him saying, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac." He promised to be with Jacob and to grant Him peace and protection where he was going. Moreover, He would bring him safely back home. Little wonder that Jacob exclaimed on awaking, "How dreadful is this place." He called it Bethel and vowed that as long as he lived he would serve the God who had appeared to him if He would bring him back home in peace and safety. This passage might not seem to have any relation to the Mal'Akh, but if we turn to Genesis 31:11-13 we will note that evil was again upon Jacob in the form of Laban, and that the Mal'Akh appeared to him saying, "I am the God of Bethel." He tells Jacob that He has blessed him and that it is now time to return home. He promises Jacob that He will be with him and reminds him of the vow he made at Bethel years before, demanding that he now fulfill it.

Nowhere in Scripture are vows made to mere angels and when vows were made to God they were considered binding, requiring literal fulfillment, anything less being a sin.²² Here the Mal'Akh claims that the vow had been made to Him, the vow of lifelong service and worship. He demands its fulfillment.

In faith Jacob returns and then when near home, the name and

²¹Gen. 28:12,13.

²²Eccles. 5:4-6.

impending presence of Esau seems to bring evil very near again. Worried and perplexed he takes a walk in the night and suddenly meets a man who forces him to fight.²³ All night the fight rages and during the night Jacob realizes who his antagonist is. When dawn begins to break the opponent cripples Jacob by miraculously shrinking a muscle in his leg. Jacob, though crippled, clings to his adversary and though his antagonist wants to leave before daybreak, Jacob refuses to let Him go until he is blessed. Having refused to quit without exacting a blessing, Jacob received a rich blessing, a new name. No more was he to be called Jacob, the Supplanter, but Israel, the Prince of God. He knew he had wrestled with God, had seen Him face to face, therefore, he names the place Peniel. The reason was simple, "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved."

In Hosea 12:3-5, the prophet sheds considerable light on this passage when he refers back to Jacob and says,

He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God; yea, he had power over the Mal'Akh and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him, he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us; even the Lord God of Hosts; the Lord is his Memorial.

Hosea here refers to the wrestling of Jacob with the man spoken of in Genesis 32:24-30. He terms Him the Mal'Akh, also calling Him the God of Bethel, the Lord of Hosts, or the Lord of all. Little wonder that Jacob prayed over his grandsons, "The Mal'Akh who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."²⁴ The Mal'Akh he knew as God, yet distinct in person from God. He knew and loved Him as his Redeemer from all evil.

²³Gen. 32:24-30.

²⁴Gen. 48:16.

Years later a man named Moses was herding sheep on Mount Horeb when suddenly his attention was drawn to the sight of a bush burning.²⁵ Strangely enough, the bush did not burn even though the fire raged within it. This phenomenon aroused his curiosity and he decided to go over to the bush and discover the reason for such an unnatural occurrence. As Moses drew near, he was suddenly addressed by the Mal'Akh Yahweh, who told him to remove his shoes for the ground on which he stood was holy ground, sanctified by the presence of the Mal'Akh. Moses then heard the awesome introduction of the Being he confronted, in the words, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses, in speechless terror, hid his face for we are told he was afraid to look on God. He recognized the Mal'Akh as God, and yet the Mal'Akh is pictured as being other than God in person.

The terms Elohim and Yahweh are here used interchangeably with the term Mal'Akh. Not only does the Mal'Akh call Himself God in verse six, but He tells Moses that He is the "I Am" God, the only, and sole-existent God in the universe. Furthermore, He commanded Moses to go and deliver the Israelites because their prayers had come up to Him. Moses kept whining and making excuses until the Mal'Akh became angry. He rebuked Moses sharply, claimed to be the Creator of Man²⁶ and hence the final authority on what a man is and is not capable of doing. He also empowered Moses to perform miracles in His Name. Needless to say, Moses went to Egypt and boldly declared before Pharaoh that the Lord God of Israel

²⁵Ex. 3:2-6.

²⁶Ex. 4:11.

demanding the release of His people.²⁷

Moses courageously and faithfully carried out God's commands. God judged Egypt through the ten plagues and rendered it powerless to attempt any reprisals against the Children of Israel for years to come. He led His people through the Red Sea toward Mt. Sinai in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Although in Exodus 12:21,22, we are told Yahweh was in the cloudy pillar, in Exodus 14:19 we are told the Angel of God or the Mal'Akh Elohim was in the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

For the next forty years the visible presence of the Mal'Akh was with Israel by day and night in the cloud. In Exodus 23:20-25 God says He is sending the Angel before Israel as their Guide thus showing the Mal'Akh to be separate in person from Him. In Exodus 32:34 and Exodus 33:2,3 God refuses to go any further with the Children of Israel in Person lest He destroy them because of their sinful behavior. However, He will send His Angel to guide them Who will bring them safely into the promised land. In Numbers 20:16, Moses sends emissaries to Edom, asking permission to pass through the country. He says that the prayers of the Israelites during the period of slavery in Egypt, resulted in God sending the Mal'Akh who had brought them out of Egypt.

When Israel had entered Canaan and laid siege to Jericho, Joshua, the successor to Moses as the civil leader, went for a walk in the evening to think about the problems confronting him.²⁸ Suddenly an armed Warrior stood before him with drawn sword. Joshua approached Him and challenged

²⁷Ex. 5:1.

²⁸Josh. 5:13; Josh. 6:2.

Him, demanding identification. The Warrior replied that He was come to Joshua as the Captain of the hosts of God, or the Prince of the army of Yahweh. Joshua fell on his face and worshipped the Messenger of God, thus acknowledging Him as God. The Prince of God received the worship and told Joshua to take off his shoes for the ground about Him was sanctified by His presence. It is interesting to note that in both the calling of Moses and Joshua, the removal of the shoes is repeated, only in this case the Mal'Akh calls Himself the Prince of God. In chapter six the Prince is called Yahweh.²⁹ While the incident designates Him as God, it nevertheless shows Him to be distinct in person from God.

As the years passed in the promised land, Israel became apostate and idolatrous. God at such times delivered His people into the hands of their enemies who mistreated them. When the Israelites repented, God would raise up a person who would deliver them. Gideon was one such man. In Judges 6:11-24, the Mal'Akh Yahweh appeared to him and told him to go and deliver his people from the Midianites. Gideon wanted to be sure of the fact that God was actually appointing him to the task. For this reason he asked the Mal'Akh to receive an offering at his hands. The Mal'Akh said He would wait for him to bring the offering. Scripture here explicitly relates that it was the Mal'Akh who appeared and that it is the Mal'Akh who instructs Gideon to go and deliver Israel. Gideon is to go, having been sent by the Mal'Akh, upheld by the Mal'Akh's might. When Gideon brought the offering, the Mal'Akh told him to place it on a rock. He then touched it with His staff and miraculous fire rose out of the rock and consumed the offering. As He did so, He vanished, leaving

²⁹Josh. 6:2.

Gideon terrified and in fear of death. Scripture says Gideon knew that his visitor had been the Mal'Akh Yahweh, and that he had seen Him face to face.³⁰ Then Scripture states that Yahweh, not the Mal'Akh, assures Gideon that he will not die. It is important to note that the name of God is here applied to the Mal'Akh, who though called God, is yet separate in person. It also should be noted that the fear of death was only inspired by the appearance of God to men.³¹

After the Israelites had been delivered from the Midianites according to the word of the Mal'Akh, they again became unfaithful, and were afflicted by the Philistines. In Judges thirteen, two appearances of the Mal'Akh Yahweh are recorded, one to the wife of Manoah, and one to both Manoah and his wife.³² The purpose of the appearances is to announce the birth of a strange deliverer, a man who would always fight alone in divinely given strength, the Nazarite, Samson. When Manoah prayed for a second visitation it was granted. When Manoah asked permission to prepare a lamb for Him, the Mal'Akh pointed out that He will not eat of it but that as a burnt offering it will be acceptable to God. Manoah then asked for the Mal'Akh's name and was told, "Why do you ask, seeing it is Wonderful?"³³ As soon as the offering was ready it was presented to the Mal'Akh who caused it to be consumed in miraculous fire. He vanished in the flame and did not reappear. Manoah and his wife then realized that their visitor had been none other than the Mal'Akh Yahweh. The

³⁰Judges 6:22.

³¹Gen. 22:30; Judges 6:22,23; 13:22.

³²Judges 13:2-5; 13:8-23.

³³Note: Is. 9:6.

terror of death rested on Manoah and he said, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."³⁴ In this section, the Mal'Akh is depicted, and thus distinguished from God, yet He is termed both Elohim and Yahweh, the names for God.

Years later, David committed the sin of pride in having his subjects counted.³⁵ God through his prophet Gad, let David choose one of three punishments, famine, defeat, or a plague from God. David chose to fall into the hand's of God.³⁶ We are told that seventy thousand people died throughout the land, and as the Mal'Akh Yahweh was approaching Jerusalem to destroy it, David went with the elders of Israel to the threshingfloor of Arnan or Araunah, the Jebusite. There they fell down before the visible Mal'Akh, and David pleaded for the life of his people. He asked that the punishment might fall on him instead.³⁷ The Mal'Akh instructed Gad, the prophet, to tell David to offer a burnt offering at that spot. When David presented the offering, God devoured it in fire. God then instructs the Mal'Akh to cease His destruction. It is interesting to note that Solomon built the temple of God where God appeared to David. The Mal'Akh was seen by David.³⁸ The Mal'Akh was stopped on His mission of destruction by Yahweh or Elohim. Having been distinguished from God in person in 2 Samuel 24:16-20 and 1 Chronicles 21:15-19, He is made synonymous with Yahweh in 2 Chronicles 3:1.

³⁴Judges 13:22.

³⁵2 Sam. 24:2-10; 1 Chron. 21:15-19.

³⁶2 Sam. 24:12-15.

³⁷2 Sam. 24:16,17.

³⁸1 Chron. 21:16.

The divine honor and glory accorded the Mal'Akh by the Old Testament is shown vividly in Zechariah 12:8. Here the Messianic time is spoken of as being a time of great glory. It was to be the time in which the house of David would reach its greatest moment. The glory of the house of David would be as Elohim or God, as the Mal'Akh Yahweh.

Finally, approximately four hundred years before Christ, Malachi refers to the Mal'Akh in Malachi 3:1-3. Here he states that the Mal'Akh who had played such a tremendous role in the history of the Jews, who had helped them again and again, who had become to them a source of delight, He it was who would appear as the One sent by God for the sake of men. When He came, His mission would be to cleanse, to purify, and to judge. Malachi thus pictures the Messianic mission of the Mal'Akh to be the Climactic one. He would appear once more to redeem and cleanse Israel from all evil through judgment. This redemptive and yet punitive mission of the Mal'Akh is in perfect harmony with His many appearances in the Old Testament. Isaiah also speaks of such a visitation by the Messiah.³⁹

In the pages of Holy Writ God declares, "I am the Lord, that is my Name, and My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."⁴⁰ God also declares elsewhere in Scripture, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."⁴¹

Such worship, praise, and honor the Mal'Akh always received. Certainly He was not Satan acting as God's messenger. Neither was He a mere

³⁹Is. 63:1-9; 42:1-4.

⁴⁰Is. 42:8.

⁴¹Matt. 4:10.

angel,⁴² for any angel would have sinned by doing and claiming all the Mal'Akh did. He was, we are convinced, a separate person within the Godhead, true God Himself.

In the mind of the writer, the tremendous role the Mal'Akh played in delivering Israel from slavery and leading it to the glory of the promised land is one of the basic reasons for the delusions which the people of Jesus time had concerning the mission of the Messiah. Since, as is mentioned above, Malachi 3:1-3 speaks of the coming of the Mal'Akh of the covenant as the Messiah, one can understand their perversion of the truth. They knew from the Old Testament that the principal task of the Mal'Akh had been the founding, guiding, and protecting of the chosen race. He had led them into the promised land and had driven out all the enemies before them until the Israelites resorted to idolatry. This mistake they would not repeat and in not repeating it, in hueing to the letter of the Law, they looked forward to another glorious manifestation of the Mal'Akh in which He would lead them against all physical foes and reestablish them in the promised land, giving them back the kingdom of David. Thus the purging, refining, and judgment of His promised coming was not to be directed against His chosen people, but against its enemies. They were willing to acknowledge Him as the Mal'Akh of God, willing to acknowledge His power over history and nations, but unwilling to accept His judgment of them because of their sins.

⁴²Ioannis Gerhardi, Loci Theologici (Lipsiae: J. C. Hinrichs, 1885), VIII, 311.

The Mal'Akh Yahweh is Called God and Christ in the New Testament

The concept of the Mal'Akh was not an unknown thing to the New Testament believers. Instead, it served as a source of witness to the many gracious dealings of God with His people in Old Testament times.

In Acts 7:30-35 Stephen referred to the call of Moses by God at the burning bush.⁴³ He then says that Moses was sent by the hand of the Angel or Mal'Akh who appeared to him in the bush. When he quotes the conversation he says God spoke to Moses, finally stating that the Angel sent Moses to deliver Israel. He too equates the Mal'Akh and God. Stephen even goes so far as to state that Moses spoke with the Mal'Akh in Mt. Sinai.⁴⁴ This would certainly mean that he considered the Mal'Akh to be God.

Paul also refers to the Mal'Akh in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 when he speaks of the gracious guidance, protection and provision given the Israelites as they journeyed from Egypt to the promised land.⁴⁵ He culminates the passage by stating that all the Israelites passed through the sea, and were all baptized in it unto Moses. Furthermore, they were all under the cloud and were all baptized in it unto Moses. All Israel also drank the same spiritual drink, for they all ate and drank through the bounty of the Rock that followed them or went with them. Paul

⁴³Ex. 3:2-4, 19.

⁴⁴Acts 7:38.

⁴⁵Real Encyklopadie fur Protestantische Theologie und Kirche (Leipzig, Germany: n.p., 1885), Sechzehnte Band, p. 15; Adolf Hoenecke, Hoenecke Dogmatik (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing Co., n.d.), II, 160.

undoubtedly is referring to Moses' song in Deuteronomy 32 where in verses 4, 18, 30 and 31 God is spoken of as the Rock of Israel, who had so marvelously sustained them.

That the concept of God as the Rock of Israel is common in the Old Testament can readily be seen by such passages as 2 Samuel 2:2, 2 Samuel 22:47, Psalm 18:31, Psalm 28:1, Psalm 62:2 and Psalm 94:22. From these passages it can validly be said that Paul was referring to God as following the Jews in their Exodus. According to Exodus 13:21, Exodus 14:19,24, Exodus 23:20-25, Exodus 32:34, Exodus 33:2,3 and Numbers 20:16, with all of which Paul was familiar, the Mal'Akh Yahweh led the children of Israel in the Exodus. Paul says the Rock or God who followed the children of Israel in their Journey was Christ.⁴⁶ It can validly be said from this passage, then, that the Mal'Akh and Christ are one and the same, also in the mind of Paul.

It could not be anything else, for the Rock which Paul speaks of and names as Christ, followed the children of Israel through the Red Sea and went with them for forty years. It fed them miraculously for forty years and gave them drink miraculously when it was needed. It was a spiritual living Rock. It moved about. It, as a Spirit, spiritually provided the physical and spiritual needs of over two million people for forty years. Hence, it certainly was not a physical and stationary rock, for no physical rock could do these things. The evident, plain and contextual meaning is that the Rock spoken of here was Christ, the Mal'Akh Yahweh of the Old Testament and was understood to be so by Paul, writing

⁴⁶ 1 Cor. 10:4.

by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.⁴⁷

Summary of the Mal'Akh Yahweh

Exegetes and critics of varied stripes and colors have tried to belittle the majestic and divine stature of the Angel of the Lord, but all their words, arguments, and protests are useless against this Rock, as Paul calls Him in 1 Corinthians 10:4. He will remain to endless ages loved, worshipped, and adored, Christ, our Rock of Ages, the Mal'Akh Yahweh of the Old Testament. If we would try to draw up a list of Scriptural truths concerning the Mal'Akh, truths known to Jewish believers at the time of Jesus, the following would perhaps be representative.

1. The Mal'Akh Yahweh is superior to created angels.
2. He controls the destinies of nations for the welfare of His people.
3. He has power to forgive, to retain and to punish sins.
4. He has power over Satan and Satan recognizes His power.
5. He accepts sacrifices and worship.
6. He is separate from God as to His person.
7. He is God.
8. He participated in the work of creation.
9. He is the promised Messiah.
10. He is Jesus Christ.

⁴⁷Real Encyklopadie fur Protestantische Theologie und Kirche (Leipzig, Germany: n.p., 1885), Sechzehnte Band, p. 15; Adolf Hoenecke, Hoenecke Dogmatik (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing Co., n.d.), II, 160.

CHAPTER III

THE PERSONIFIED "WISDOM OF GOD" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In 1 Corinthians 1:24, Paul utters a truth that is familiar to all Christians, namely, that all who believe in Jesus acknowledge Him as the Power of God incarnate and the Wisdom of God incarnate. If one stops to consider the development and fulfillment of the plan of redemption against the backdrop of sinful man's history, he has to acknowledge that Christ was indeed the Power of God incarnate. One also has to acknowledge the fact that the plan of redemption could only have been conceived by God and carried out by God. It is only fitting that the Son of God who carried out this plan be called the Wisdom of God incarnate. Certainly, Paul in this passage proclaims Christ as the Wisdom of God incarnate, thus personifying Wisdom. It is interesting to note that this personification of "Wisdom"¹ is already begun in the Old Testament.

Since the time of the Apostles three general interpretations have been proposed for the word "Wisdom" as found in the book of Proverbs, especially in Proverbs 8:22-31.²

(1) The first view is that when the term "Wisdom" is used in a supernatural or divine sense it refers to an attribute of the Triune God. This becomes a deliberately biased type of thinking when one is confronted with the plain words of the text. An attribute is never a divine person neither does it claim other divine attributes or powers for itself. Yet

¹Hebrew, Chokmah, transliterated--Greek, Sophia, transliterated.

²Rudolph E. Honsey, "The Personal Wisdom in Proverbs Eight" (unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1945), p. 4.

in the following sections of Proverbs "Wisdom" does this very thing.

(2) Another objection is the manner in which the Old Testament refers to personified Wisdom. Grammatically, the feminine form is used. This seems strange at first, for God hardly evokes a feminine picture in the mind. However, it must be remembered that there are no neuter forms in Hebrew and all nouns must therefore be either masculine or feminine. The feminine form usually refers to those things which are without life, abstract ideas, countries, towns, parts of the body, and powers of nature.³ The things to which the feminine form is attached are not necessarily feminine. For example, the word father has a feminine plural ending. Thus when personified Wisdom in Proverbs is referred to in the feminine form, it does not mean that Wisdom is a woman. It merely is done this way because the noun Wisdom is classified as feminine. This school of thought does, however, admit the personification of Wisdom, although it denies to it divinity.

(3) The third view of personified "Wisdom" in Proverbs is that it refers to the Second Person of the Trinity. This view has been taken by a large number of the Church fathers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Hilary, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Augustine, as well as Luther and later commentators such as Hengstenberg and Matthew Henry. This is the present view of conservative Lutherans and is also the view of the writer.

However, since the purpose of this paper is to ascertain the faith of the Jew at the time of Christ on the basis of the message of the Old

³Rudolph E. Honsey, "The Personal Wisdom in Proverbs Eight" (unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1945), p. 20.

Testament and is not meant to be a review of later believers' faith or unbelievers' doubts, let us turn to the book of Proverbs and let it speak for itself.

If we turn to Proverbs 1:20-33, we are immediately confronted with personified Wisdom. Wisdom cries in the streets, the markets, the gates, and gathering places, seeking to instill in simple, scornful, sinful and foolish men the knowledge and fear of God. To anyone who will listen to her, she guarantees peace, safety, and quietness from fear. However, mankind is so corrupt that they simply ignore her plea.⁴ Because of this willful unbelief she pronounces doom and destruction upon all who do not listen and fear God. The call to repentance, the promise, and the judgment are clearly final, and as such would indicate they come from God.

The above mentioned portion of Scripture becomes exceedingly interesting and clear in the light of Luke 11:49-52. Here Jesus speaks of an eternal decree uttered by Wisdom in the interest of man's salvation. Wisdom would send prophets and apostles but they would be persecuted and killed by rebellious man. Because of man's treatment of these heaven sent messengers, an accounting will be exacted, vengeance will be taken. The reason for such divine judgment was that in the denial of Wisdom's invitation by the leaders of the Jews, the rank and file Jews were deprived of the key of knowledge of eternal life. Truly, "Wisdom" had cried in the streets, marketplaces, in gatherings, in city and country. Wisdom had cried through men of the Old Testament but to no avail. Jesus, in effect, applied this title to Himself when He cried out to the men of His day and when He sent the Apostles into all the world. They cried out

⁴Prov. 1:20-25.

in His Name to all mankind as we do today.

Another interesting passage of the New Testament in which Jesus refers to the unbelief of the Jews and terms Himself the Wisdom of the Old Testament is found in Matthew 11:16-19 with a parallel passage in Luke 7:31-35.

He says that the Jews of His time could be compared to children playing in a marketplace. However, all do not want to play the game. As a result, when the music was supposed to inspire a joyous reaction there was none, and when it was meant to inspire a mournful reaction there was none. There was no interest whatsoever in the game.

Similarly, when John came preaching repentance, and lived as a Nazarite, the reaction was that he was a demoniac. When Jesus came as a friend of sinners and a partaker of the social part of life, He was called a drunkard, a glutton, and a consort of sinners. The last words of Jesus are a pronouncement of judgment. "Wisdom is justified of her children." Wisdom is vindicated of her children.⁵ Jesus was thus vindicated by the faithlessness and indifference of the Jews to His message. We are told in Proverbs that Wisdom sought the redemption of man, that when man rejected her message, the resultant doom was man's own fault. Thus Wisdom was vindicated of her children, thus Jesus was vindicated of the Jews as a perfect embodiment of Wisdom.

Let us go on to Proverbs 3:11-19. This section begins with a solemn admonition to the believer not to rebel against the chastening of God, but rather to find in it a guide to a more God-pleasing life, an

⁵William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 767.

encouragement to find Wisdom. Wisdom is portrayed as the greatest treasure a man can seek in this life. She offers to those who find her, long life, wealth, honor, peace, joy and life. To show how great this Wisdom is, the writer says that God created the world by Wisdom. This passage also would seem to personify Wisdom and raise her above a mere ability or store of knowledge in man's head. Certainly mere wisdom cannot grant a long life to anyone, only God can.⁶ Mere human wisdom cannot assuredly grant wealth and honor. Such blessings come from God.⁷ Neither can wisdom grant peace, joy, and life to an individual, for these are distinctly and completely gifts of God. Yet in this passage, Wisdom is granting them. It is personified.

The personification of Wisdom is continued in Proverbs 4:5-19. Here the writer is relating the instruction he received from his father. He was told to make acquisition of Wisdom the goal and purpose of his life, for Wisdom is the principal thing of life. If a man finds her, she will love him and keep him. She will exalt the person who exalts her and will grant him honor. Not only will she grant him honor, but will crown her finder with a crown of glory. A man dare not let her go, for with her his steps will not falter in life, for she is his life. Wisdom is here made the central aim of life, which cannot be justified, unless Wisdom is God. Wisdom is granted the ability to keep or sustain a man who finds her, to exalt him, grant him honor and a crown of glory.⁸ These gifts again are only God's to grant. Moreover, it is stated that Wisdom is a

⁶Ps. 36:9.

⁷Ps. 50:10-12.

⁸Ps. 73:24; Rev. 2:10.

man's life. God alone deserves this honor. It would seem that Wisdom is here made more than mere head knowledge. Wisdom is personified and granted abilities of God alone.

The clearest and most interesting passage on the personification of Wisdom in the Old Testament is Proverbs 8:22-31.⁹ Wisdom is speaking of her beginning and says that God possessed her or fashioned her in eternity. Before the earth was created she existed. She was brought forth in eternity, before there was any earth, sky, sea, or land. When God uttered his decree of creation, she was there, the delight of God, rejoicing in Him. She took special delight in man. Because of her pre-existence, because of her presence with God at creation, because of her interest in man, all men are encouraged to listen to her, for before her they are but children. Blessed is the man who keeps her ways, who daily watches and waits upon her, for whoever finds her, finds life and obtains favor with God. But whoever refuses to follow her ways, who ignores her instruction, sins against her and thus wrongs his own soul. Such a man hates Wisdom and because of this hate, loves death.

Previous to these verses in Proverbs 8:15,16 Wisdom also claims that through her all governments reign here on earth. When one considers the claims advanced by Wisdom, it is inconceivable that mere head knowledge is meant. Surely, a man's wisdom was not born in eternity, nor has man's knowledge been a source of rejoicing to God. Man's wisdom of itself could have no special interest in man, for the mind of man is its generator, neither can it consider men children, for it is the child of man. Wisdom does not bless man for keeping the ways of wisdom, nor will this

⁹Rudolph E. Honsey, op. cit., p. 3, 4.

attract the favor of God. Man's wisdom is foolishness before God.¹⁰ If a man ignores man's wisdom he does not sin, neither does he hate man's wisdom by doing so, or love death because of it.

The only possible explanation is to permit the text to speak for itself. Wisdom is then personified, she is eternal, with God from eternity and yet separate in person from Him. Wisdom rules the earth, loves man and seeks his eternal welfare before God by imparting herself to them. She is the hope of man, his source of joy, success, and peace. In her, man finds favor with God and life from Him. Whoever spurns her, thus sins, and draws upon himself death, for the absence of Wisdom in man is death. Wisdom in this passage is definitely personified and clearly pictured as a person of the Godhead.

To the writer, it is very clear that Wisdom in the Old Testament, does in some cases refer to a divine Being, other than God in person, yet united with Him; a Being possessed with all power, holiness, omniscience, grace, justice and kindness. Wisdom is made to be God in these passages and must then be considered as a person in the Trinity, for Wisdom is portrayed as a separate person within the Godhead. As before stated, Paul unmistakably identifies Wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:24, saying, "Christ, to us who are called, is the Wisdom of God."

¹⁰1 Cor. 3:19.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERSONIFIED "WORD OF GOD" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The clarity of the New Testament passages leave no room for a dispute as to the identity of the incarnate Word or Logos.¹ However, the men who taught these truths used as their Bible, the Old Testament. Because of this, the roots of many New Testament teachings are found in the Old Testament, as is also the root of the Incarnate Word.

The creation story, as such, does not refer to the Word except by the speech of God. In fact, there is no clear reference to the Word as such until after the period covered by the Pentateuch. The reason seems to be that in the Pentateuch, the Mal'akh Yahweh is the messenger of God and His mouthpiece, thus fulfilling the purpose of the personified Word. However, as prophets begin to become more numerous and the nation of Israel is settled, the prophets speak, of and by the Word. Again and again in the Old Testament the phrase comes, "And the word of God was to."² Admittedly these passages do not prove the knowledge of the personified Word as such, but certainly they recognized the speaker, no matter how the message was transmitted.

Psalm 33:4-6 sets before us the first use of the term Word of God in the sense of a divine Being. The Psalmist first says that the Word of Yahweh is right or upright or righteous, and that all His works are done in truth. The Word of Yahweh then is holy and true and all his

¹ Hebrew, davar, transliterated--Greek, Logos, transliterated.

² 1 Kings 12:22; 1 Chron. 17:3; 2 Chron. 11:2.

works reflect this. Secondly, the Psalmist says that the cosmos was made by the Word of Yahweh, and all the countless galaxies by the utterance of His voice. The Word of Yahweh is designated here as the Creator of the Universe. He is credited with participation in the work of creation. One other thing to note is that Yahweh Himself is not spoken of, but rather a Being separate in person from Him and yet being true God with Him.

Psalm 147:15,18 presents the personified Word in a different light. He is pictured as the messenger or herald of God carrying the commands of God over the earth. He is pictured as running very swiftly. Yahweh sends His Word to the frigid places and melts them, He stirs them with His wind and causes the waters to flow. The Word here is presented as the bringer of spring after a hard winter. He personally makes the season change for the benefit of God's people.

When we gather these truths together, we see that the personified Word in the Old Testament is the mouthpiece of God. In Him and through Him, God spoke at creation. As a result the universe came into being. The universe was a reflection of His glory, being perfect and holy. The personified Word is thus a divine person in the Godhead, separate from Yahweh or God. In addition, there is also evident in the concept of the personified Word of the Old Testament a strong Messianic tone. It would be the Word, who would take the message of God to the remotest isles of the earth where there was only the icy cold darkness and death of the winter of sin. He would carry the message of God, then, not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles.³ He would thus be the universal Word of

³Is. 42:1-4.

Life, for through His message the icy darkness of sin's winter would thaw and give way to the light and life of spring. In Him all men would find deliverance from sin, and life, strength, and favor with God.

John develops this beautifully by inspiration in the first chapter of his Gospel when he tells us that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In the same chapter, verse 14, we are told that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Not only this, but that we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The concept of the Incarnate Word or Logos is very clear in the New Testament as the above passages indicate. It is clearly stated that at the time of creation the Word was with God. Not only was the Word with God but He was God, and without Him, nothing was made that was made. The Word spoken of here is designated as existing from eternity, as being God, yet separate from God, as being a participant in the act of creation. John puts, as it were, the final and complete touch to this portrait of the divine, incarnate Word, by saying that He became flesh and dwelt among us.⁴ Not only did He become flesh and dwell among us, but He demonstrated to all the fullness of the glory of God the Father. He could do this and did do this for He was the Only Begotten of the Father, full of divine grace and truth.

Later on, John again spoke of the incarnate Word in 1 John 1:1-3. Here he states positively that this Word was from the beginning from eternity. He knew this to be true and so did the rest of the apostles because they had seen Him, conversed with Him face to face, and touched Him. This Word was the Word of life. The life that was in Him was shown

⁴John 1:14.

openly, namely, the eternal life which was with the Father. This life, John says, is the life we have seen and heard, and this is the life we declare to you, so that you may have fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. John further declares that he and the apostles were eyewitnesses of this. In this passage the divine stature of the Word is clearly shown, being designated as Christ, the Son of God.

In 1 John 5:7 the inspired writer very clearly states that in heaven there are three divine witnesses who seek to guide man to salvation in Christ, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. According to John 1:14 and 1 John 1:13 the Word spoken of here is Christ. The Word then, is true God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, one in essence with the Father and the Holy Ghost. He is indeed our Savior and the Word of life for all mankind.

Revelation 19:13 records a wondrous vision granted to the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos. He saw heaven opened and the Lord Jesus seated upon a white charger as Prince of the Hosts of heaven.⁵ He was clothed in bloodsoaked raiment⁶ and the name of glory by which He was called was the "Word of God."

⁵Josh. 5:14,15.

⁶Is. 63:1-6.

CHAPTER V

THE EBED YAHWEH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Servant Poems of the Old Testament are of great beauty. They point with singular clarity to the Ebed Yahweh as the Servant of God who was to bring God's salvation and truth to all people. These poems were loved, known and believed by God's People. This can readily be seen by the many references in the New Testament to them. Here the people of God saw their Messiah, He for whom the faithful longed and waited. There are four main songs; some add a fifth, Isaiah 61. For our purposes, we shall consider the four considered by all to be Servant Poems.¹ They are taken from the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 42:1-7 is the First Servant Poem, and if one were to title it, perhaps it could be called "God's Missionary to the World." "Behold," God says, look at my Servant, the one whom I place before you as my own chosen Ambassador. My soul delights in Him. He is, however, no ordinary servant. He bears within Him the Spirit of God. His is a gigantic task, to place the truths of God before the Gentiles of the world. He will not be a boisterous Servant, He will not seek public acclaim. The penitent and sorrowing sinner He will not despise or condemn, and the man of weak faith He will not destroy. He will present to them the gracious truths of God in faithfulness and love. Nothing will be able to turn Him aside from His appointed task. He will not cease working till the truths of God have covered the earth, reaching even the remotest isle.

¹First Poem--Is. 42:1-7, Second Poem--Is. 49:1-6, Third Poem--Is. 50:4-9, Fourth Poem--Is. 52:13-53:12.

The beauty of this poem is ever enhanced by the progress of the Gospel in the world today. The Ebed Yahweh was to be placed before not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles.² In Him, as He carried out His God-given task of confronting the world with the truth of God, there resided the Spirit of God. He thus would become the comfort of the sorrowing, the strength of the weak, the inspiration of the strong. His mission would be an ongoing one that nothing could turn aside, for He Himself would see that the Word of God would reach the remotest isle.

Isaiah 49:1-6, the Second Servant Poem, could perhaps be called "The Redemption of the World." The poet addresses the remotest isles and calls on the most distant nations to listen to His song. They should listen while He instructs them as to Himself and His mission. He says that God has called Him from the womb, that from the time His mother first carried Him in the womb God had named Him. God fashioned and protected Him for a specific task. He made His mouth like a sharp sword. He was kept safely in the quiver of God as His choicest arrow until the time was come for Him to be launched on His mission. Then, when the time came, God sent Him saying that He was the chosen Servant of God. He was to live for Israel, in its stead before God, that God in Him might be glorified. The work was long and hard, and it seemed that at length He was alone, forsaken, and despised. Yet, he rested His case before God, trusting Him to vindicate Him. This God did, God who formed Him from the womb and sent Him to bring back Jacob, and to gather Israel. Because His Servant had done the difficult work assigned to Him, God glorified Him, and showed Him to be His own strength by making Him not only the Servant of God to

²Acts 9:15.

the tribes of Jacob and the believers in Israel, but also a light for all Gentiles, a beacon of salvation to the ends of the earth.

The Servant is presented as a specially designed instrument of God. He was to be a man, named by God before birth. His mission was to teach men of God and for this reason He was gifted with a sword-like mouth. He would faithfully carry out God's mission of salvation, being the substitute for Israel before God and in Him God would be glorified. He would be humbled but exalted above all, for He would be made the Light of salvation for the whole world. Perhaps it was of this song that Simeon thought when he said, "For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people, Israel."³

Isaiah 50:4-9, the Third Servant Poem, could perhaps be called "Mission of Victory." In it the Servant further illustrates His mission among men by saying that God has given Him the ability to speak eloquently so that He would be able to cheer the weary and heartsick when they needed it. He would do nothing of Himself,⁴ but would walk before God as a disciple, carrying out God's instructions, day by day. So obedient would He be that He would not shun the climax of His mission which entailed suffering. He would freely offer His back to the floggers, His cheeks to those who wanted to pull out handfuls of beard. He would not hide His face when they wanted to shame Him and spit in it. In all His suffering, of one thing He would remain confident, that God would be with Him and help Him. In this hope He would face whatever lay ahead, setting His face like flint, knowing this was not shame for Him. Rather, in all

³Luke 2:30-32.

⁴John 5:19,30.

confidence and boldness, He could declare that God who would vindicate Him was very near. Secure in this confidence, He could challenge all in earth or hell to confront Him in conflict. Who would dare to confront Him? God would help Him, who then would presume to condemn Him? Whoever did would fall to pieces like a moth-eaten garment. He would be destroyed as completely as though by moths.

In all this I will remain confident, the Servant is almost heard to say, for God who has given Me the ability to speak to people in need, God who has instructed Me day by day, God who has helped Me in My suffering will surely vindicate Me before all men. Who will dare to oppose Me when God has glorified Me? Destruction awaits any that do, for I am God's Servant.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is the Fourth Servant Poem. The title that would seem to fit it best is "The Suffering and Exalted Servant." God presents His Servant to the world by saying that He would be exalted. He then presents the manner in which this will take place. Many would see the Servant in His suffering and would be aghast at His appearance. His face would appear marred beyond humanity and His form would be lacerated more than any man's. However, in this way He would cause many nations to exult in Him. Kings would become silent when confronted with Him for in Him they will see what was not told them and in Him they would be forced to consider what they had not heard.

Some exegetes say that the kings now try to justify their behavior by Isaiah 53; others say the prophet speaks on behalf of all people.⁵ Be

⁵Julius A. Bewer, The Book of Isaiah (New York, New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers), II, 42.

that as it may, the universal cry goes out, "Who could have believed what we have heard?" To whom has the might of God been revealed? In other words, "What man could understand this or see God's might in it?"

For the Servant grew up before God as a sapling out of a dry ground. His folks and family had no status that would give Him a reception before men. He had no particular attraction in His person and when we looked on Him there was no particular beauty that we would desire Him. In fact, He was despised and forsaken by men,⁶ a man of sufferings and familiar with grief and disease, so we and all men passed Him off lightly. As we look at Him now and consider Him, we are compelled to say that He was carrying upon Himself our sicknesses and griefs, He was carrying our pains or sorrows. However, at the time we thought that God was punishing Him for His own sins. But, instead we see now that He was pierced for our sins, He was crushed for our evils. The punishment necessary for our peace was upon Him and with His lash marks we are restored. We must then admit that all of us have strayed like sheep, each of us has chosen his own particular path. Yet God in love has placed upon Him the sin of us all. God's Servant was treated harshly. He was even tortured, but He never complained. Mocking, torturing and killing Him was just like leading a lamb to the butcher, or like a ewe when sheared. He never objected. He was killed by oppression and judgment and who took to heart His fate?

However, we see now that His life was taken because of the sins of us all. He died with evildoers, but was buried as one of the rich, because He Himself had done no sinful act, neither was any falsehood in His mouth. God saw fit to crush Him, to punish Him severely, making His

⁶ John 19:15.

Servant to be the offering for all sin, seemingly so guilty with sin, that men would say He deserved to die. Yet by becoming this offering for man the Servant would be glorified. He would see the results of His atonement in the hearts of His followers. He, Himself, would spread abroad His work of atonement and bring about the will of God among men. The effecting of the gracious will of God in mankind was now turned over to Him because of what He did for them. As this atonement spreads He would see the results of His suffering in men and would be well satisfied. By the very evil done to Him, the Servant of God would make many righteous, for their sins are now transferred to Him.⁷

Therefore, God says that He will grant His Servant greatness, and the Servant as a conqueror will divide the spoils of His conquest with His followers. He would be granted this right because He gave up His life for mankind, being designated as a sinner by God and men, thus carrying upon Himself the sins of mankind for mankind. In doing this, He pleaded effectually for the sinners among men.

This poem is surely one of great comfort, beauty and power to any Christian. It places before men the vicarious atonement of the Ebed Yahweh. It shows plainly that as our substitute, He was to be put to death, so that through His death all men might have eternal life. The fact that some have the audacity to deny that the vicarious atonement was fulfilled in Christ and that it refers to Him in view of New Testament passages such as Matthew 8:17, Mark 15:28, Luke 22:31, John 12:37,38, Acts 8:32,33, Romans 10:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13, Hebrew 9:28, 1 Peter 2:24,25, and 1 Peter 3:18 is incomprehensible.

¹John 2:1,2.

Summary of the Ebed Yahweh Poems

According to The Pulpit Commentary in its explanation of Isaiah 53, until about 1150 A.D., the time of Aben Ezra, even the Jews acknowledged that the Servant Poems pointed to the Messiah. They then claimed that they pointed to either some personage in Israel or collective Israel. The interpretation of the Servant being collective Israel seems to be favored by modern Biblical critics. However, the Servant of the Lord, the Ebed Yahweh, has these things said of Him in the Old Testament.

1. He is the Lord's anointed (Messiah).
2. He is sacrificed by God for the sin of mankind.
3. He would live among men and would be despised and rejected.
4. False judgment would condemn Him to death.
5. He would be put to death with evildoers.
6. After His death He would lie in a rich man's tomb (cave).
7. He would rise from the dead and be the light of the world (Gentiles) and spread His message and followers over the entire earth.
8. He would be exalted by God to rule heaven and earth.
9. He would be the judge of all mankind.

This was the Ebed Yahweh of the Old Testament. The Servant is spoken of in a very personal way and is granted glory and power that belong to God alone. It cannot, therefore, refer to a nation or a prophet. To the believing Jews of the New Testament, like Simeon, He was none other than the Messiah, the Savior of Israel and of the entire world.

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSIAH AS PORTRAYED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

If one were to draw together all the truths presented in these four facets of Old Testament Christology, volumes could be written. It is not the intention of the author to exhaust the field, for it is inexhaustible, but rather to present some basic truths concerning the Messiah which undoubtedly were known to the believers at the time of Christ. Perhaps the best way to achieve this goal would be to write a composite description of the Messiah.

He would appear as a man of undistinguished parentage. Even though He came from such a background, He would be divine, a separate person in the Godhead, angels and Satan being subordinate to Him. In Him would reside all power for miracles, for judgment, for forgiveness and retention of sins. He would be the mouthpiece or Word of God and in Him would be found the Wisdom of God which would be applied to all in a public ministry. He would be despised and rejected of men and put to death by them through falsehood, torture, flogging and execution. He would be executed with criminals for man's sins and be buried in a rich man's tomb. He would rise from the grave and cover the earth with the story of His work of redemption. He would be exalted by God to be the ruler of heaven and earth and the final judge of all mankind.

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